Come it must! : an address / delivered by William L. Sherrill, April 16th, 1922, at the Music Hall, upon the 2d visit of Marcus Garvey to Cincinnati, Ohio

Sherrill, William.

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Come It Must!

An Address Delivered by

WILLIAM L. SHERRILL

April 16th, 1922

at the Music Hall, upon the 2d visit of

The Hon. MARCUS GARVEY

to Cincinnati, Ohio

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Your Excellency, Provisional President of Africa, President of the Cincinnati Division, Officers, Black Cross Nurses, Legions, Members and Friends of the Universal Negro Improvement Association:

We have come to your city tonight in your interest; we have come for the purpose of your betterment; the establishment of your cause and for the assurance of your future destinies. We have come in interest of an organization which is sweeping the world like a mighty forest fire and catching a grip on 400 million Negroes that will not be loosened until Negroes the world over are respected and given justice in whatever country they desire to work and live. We come in interest of a work which weighs heavily upon our heart, a cause which fires our very being with an unconquerable determination not to rest this human frame until it has given up all there is in it, intellectually, spiritually and physically for Negro freedom and redemption.

The conditions and circumstances my people have been forced to face for over three hundred years, have caused us much concern ever since we have been old enough to search the pages of history and read between the lines. And having read and understood we have but one ambition and that is to help remove the chains which bind black men everywhere, socially, industrially and economically. We are wrapped up soul and body in this fight for our race. We see other races and nations achieving and accomplishing and we want black men given unrestricted opportunities to achieve and accomplish. We are selfish enough to want the black man to share every heritage shared by any other race or nationality. We are narrow enough to think first of the Negro's cause and second of the other fellow's. We are biased enough to see the Negro's point of view from every angle. Nevertheless we are not to be too critically censured for these characteristics, for they are not simply individualistic, but very much human when one is born and raised under conditions many of us were born and raised under in this country.

We speak to you tonight as one who has seen, experienced and been a victim of the terrible treatment accorded Negroes in the land of the free and the home of the brave. We are born and raised in a country where money, greed and intense race prejudice holds sway; in a country where every conceivable method or practice is resorted to that Negroes might feel their inferiority; in a country where Negro women are unprotected from the approach of the scoundrels of the dominant race unless they are protected by the very blood of their own; in a country where regardless of Negro loyalty and devotion, to both flag and country they are segregated, disfranchised and lynched for mere trifles; in a country where regardless of a Negro's culture and refinement, regardless of his ability, intelligence, or financial standing, he is denied the accommodation of the best hotels, theatres, and public conveyances, prohibited from living in certain districts, and refused a fair chance in industrial and commercial competition; in a country where white men will die and go to hell seven times before they will permit a Negro to exercise the rights of manhood and American citizenship.

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We are not compelled to ask anybody about conditions here; we are not speaking what we have read; we are not talking what we suppose, we see these hell-holes, we ride in these filthy jimcrow cars, we see the bars prohibiting our admittance to hotels, theatres and other public places, we have watched the breaking of pledge after pledge, and promise after promise of political parties and factions, who rode into office on our shoulders. We hear them in certain sections daring us to scratch a ballot; we see our brethren robbed of their earnings; we smell the burning flesh of our comrades and hear the groans of innocent men dying at the hands of angry mobs. We see conditions in this country which will not let us be contented. We have experienced and come in contact with circumstances which move us to action, and it is these conditions, this state of affairs, and the black man's status universally which makes us ready and willing to give not only our time and talent, but our very life's blood that the chains of prejudice, and greed, and exploitation which bind too tightly the ambitions, possibilities and aspirations of 400 million human souls, shall be broken, giving them an opportunity to enter every phase of human endeavor and make their humble contribution to humanity and Almighty God.

The ways and means of removing these hindrances and handicaps has occupied 95 per cent of the Negro's thought, time and energy here in America ever since Lincoln struck the visible shackles which bound him. He has tried to cooperate with his dominant brother in every petty scheme for justice and fair play this brother has inaugurated.

He has struggled to educate his children and Christianize his people; remained true and loyal to his country, even while the temptation to betray lurked in his breast, due to the horrible thoughts which saturated his mind. His slave masters have picked for him leaders, whom he has followed, until these leaders failed to satisfy that appetite which had been developed by much injection of white ambitions and desires and imbibing of white psychology. The education, culture and refinement which the Negro acquired, only serves to make his burdens heavier. Because, before he had no appetite for the things his master possessed; but today he has the appetite and is denied the privilege of satisfying it.

Notwithstanding these conditions, and others I have not even touched upon, the Negro, who by Nature is a being of patience, forgiveness and hopefulness, has endured, tolerated and borne from year to year, from political campaign to political campaign, hoping that the next year, or the next campaign would bring forth a change of in his status. Years have come and years have gone; elections have come and elections have gone with no material change in the betterment of his status. Although discouragement and despondency, in the face of these facts, should have been his logical mood, he still retains a spark of hope which was fanned into flame when this last war was fought.

We heard a cry this time we had never heard before.

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We heard the mighty nations of the world crying, Democracy, Democracy, Democracy. All men must be free. Little nations must be protected, the world must be made a safer place in which to live. And the fact that caused our hopes to leap in mighty flames about us was that America led the cry. Her voice was heard above them all. We saw the white man, as he has always done, turn to the black man. France turned to her colonial possessions in Africa; England turned to British East Africa, South Africa, West Indies and Canada; Belgium turned to the Valley of the Congo; America turned to the Negro of the United States, the Negro of Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Arkansas and Louisiana, and we heard them cry in their most sympathetic tones, "Enlist in this fight for humanity. Help us make the world a decent place in which to live; Come, Black Man, come," they cried, "for there has arisen a Kaiser, who is a despiser of justice and the duty he owes mankind. He is a slave to the idea of conquering the world. He has kept faith with neither himself, the people over whom he ruled with an iron hand, nor the nations of the world. He, the incarnation of the devil himself, hates justice, democracy and fair play."

Oh God! how our hearts did leap for joy as we rushed to the Tri-colors of France, the Union Jack of England, and the Stars and Stripes of America. Why should they not leap? Had they not all but bled for these same principles. Had we not prayed and looked forward to the day when all men would be free and weaker peoples would be protected?

With these things in mind, we were ready and willing to forget all that the past had done against us. We were willing to forget that it was this same bleeding Belgium for whom we were going to die, which brutalized and maimed our brethren in the Congo Valley. We were willing to forget that it was this same distressed England which had never raised her iron heel from the necks of West Indians; we were willing to forget that it was this same sympathetic America who had lynched and burned more than three thousand of our brethren without giving them a trial; for irrespective of what the past held, the day had at last come when black men would have the hoped for privilege of dying for the freedom of all mankind, and the placing of Justice and Reason on the throne.

With faith in his former slave masters and confidence in God, black men everywhere kissed wife, mother and children "goodbye," embarked upon the transports and sailed out upon the ocean, behind whose every wave nestled a giant submarine, seeking whom it might destroy. After many days of peril and anxiety, they landed somewhere in France, uttered a prayer to God for the protection of those they had left behind, while they fought for Democracy abroad. They faced the cannons with the courage of Spartans, smelt the poisonous gas and laughed as they rushed on in the wake of liquid fire and bursting shrapnel. And while they fought in "No man's land" those they had left behind worked untiringly in the shipyards, mills and factories and over-subscribed for liberty bonds and war saving

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stamps. Their women begged for admission to the Red Cross, but were at first turned down by that grim monster, prejudice. Finally, after segregating them, they were given a chance to make their contribution. America! Great Britain! France! Belgium! you may call us "Shines," "Coons," "Darkies," and "Niggers," but thank God you dare not call us traitors, nor anarchists, for the record of the black man's loyalty is written upon European soil which was watered by his blood.

Finally, the skies began to clear, war drums ceased to throb, battle flags were furled, cannons belched no longer, barking musketry and cracking machine guns were silenced.

Victory was on the side of the redeemers of humanity. The cause of democracy had been vindicated. Black men once more embarked upon the transports, black men bound for the Congo; black men bound for South Africa; black men bound for the West Indies; black men bound for America, going back home, back to loved ones, back to the country for which they had faced death, going back to enjoy a world they had made decent; back to enjoy democracy they had purchased; back to receive opportunities their blood had dripped for. "But oh! subtle trick of cunning white men!" We had only been doped that we might the more easily die. All these things for which we fought were never meant for us, nor any of the weaker peoples of the world, even before we landed the awful monster began to show his head. Some of our companies were stripped of their flags and humiliated upon the transport. They landed in the midst of the same old order. They were crammed in the same jimcrow car, barred out of the same places. Refused the opportunities of American citizens, while the lynchers' rope continued to play its game of strangling. America gave one hurrah for their return and then began what she believes to be her Divine Right, that of keeping the Negro "in his place." White men have made tnis place for him. Race riots welcomed him in Chicago, Omaha, Springfield and Tulsa, and to assure the Negro that these celebrations were in accord with American civilization, our Nation's Capitol, the City of Washington. stopped long enough in its busy rush to stage a monster riot. It was the occurrence of these things which awakened us as never before to the fact that we were failing to receive that for which we died. We realized that we were doomed to the same oppression, exploitation and injustice we were subjected to in the past. But the question which complicates matters, is how can we bear with the same patience these same injustices, since we have donned the uniforms of England. France, Belgium and America, trod the bosom of a turbulent soil, saw the flash of liquid fire, listened to the hum of areoplanes, heard the roar of bursting shrapnel, smelt the fumes of poisonous gas, looked into the face of the fearless Hun, and wrested from him the rules of might that all men might be free? How can the Negro bear with the same patience and hope discrimination and segregation since the experiences of the recent war have created in him new visions, new ambitions and new desires? How can the Negro hear of lynching,

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burning and burying alive of brothers, and the disfranchisment of his race with the same indifference as he did in the past, when he did not know the depth of his power and the strength of his might; when he had not discovered his ablity to grapple with and overthrow; when up to the war of 1914 he had not died in a conflict waged for the specific purpose of making all men free and protecting weaker people of the world. How can the Negro continue to be patient, forgiving and long bearing? How can he continue to beg, plead and reason when he has learned so much in war that he cannot forget in peace? He was taught not only to fight, but how to fight; not only to follow leaders without asking why, but to follow black leaders without asking the reason why. He was taught that when pleading, begging, sending notes and signing treaties fail, organized force is the best way to obtain the desired results. He was taught to take from his enemies what he cannot obtain by arguments or reason.

He has heard the roar of cannons; he has felt the pangs of hunger; he has endured the pain and suffering of war, and with these things having formed a part of his life, he has returned to the valley of the Congo, to the French Colonial possessions, to South Africa, West Indies and America true and tried and not afraid to die. He is not the same Negro, he can not be dealt with the same way. He cannot be handed the same line of chatter. His eyes are opened now and he sees and beholds. His ears are unstopped and he hears and understands. He has seen the mighty nations of the world with-standing armies, guns and battleships. He sees all other nations working, sacrificing, suffering and dying to establish governments of their own; he sees by all inward and outward demonstrations that this a material age, a selfish age, an age of greed, an age of conquest, an age of force. an age of might; not an age of sentiment, not an age of pleading and begging, but an age of demanding what you want and dying for it. People today are thinking only of themselves. Races and people are beginning to draw sharp lines of demarcation between themselves which will ultimately result in a clash between the races instead of the nations or countries, which means that the race which stands idly by will in the future suffer.

China is thinking only in terms of Chinese, laying plans for a great Chinese government, preparing to protect Chinese the world over. They are educating Chinese youths to love, honor and adore everything Chinese. The Japanese are watching the interests of the Japanese, drawing up treaties for the protection of Japanese; moulding big guns to convince when reason fails, training her youth to love Japan and to be prepared to die for her if necessary. Jews who have been persecuted long and much, are busy singing, "Back to Palestine", raising funds and laying plans for its redemption. Irishmen have raised millions of dollars in this country for Irish freedom. McSwineys have died and young McSwineys are preparing to shed more blood that Irish people may be completely free. In India they have declared that they shall be free; and forces are marshalling to die for that freedom. Egyptians, Poles, and Phillipinos are preparing themselves for either freedom or

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death. Great Britian, America, France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, together with all white races of the world, are busy perfecting their fortifications, regardless of the fact that they are pretending to disarm, strengthening their fighting arms, injecting new life into their people, holding up before them racial ideals and racial achievements, interpreting all things in terms of racial achievements and racial supremacy, establishing institutions to teach their posterity to think, act and work in terms of their own race and nationality, teaching them to love and view with pride the accomplishments and achievements of their own people.

Every race and people is busy working, giving and dying that they shall establish the independence of their people, where they can work out their own destinies to the dictates of their own conscience.

The Negro, not one whit less human than these, has also caught the spirit of the age and cries out 400 million strong, Liberty, Freedom, Independence must be out portion, or black men like all other men, will choose to dye their garments red in somebody's blood. Call this statement radical, call it anarchistic, call it bolshevistic, call it a threat, call it whatever you will or may, you enemies of justice and fairplay, but I am only telling you how a people feel when they have begged and begged, pleaded and pleaded, sacrificed and given, taken and endured, borne and tolerated, until they have become sick, sick, sick and tired of bearing the burdens, and bearing the brunt of a dominant race's greed and oppression. Black men are tired of being the underdogs; subjects of prey. Frenchmen are exploiting them in the French colonial possessions; Englishmen are oppressing them in Trinidad, Barbadoes, Jamaica, and all of her British possessions in Africa and America. The Belgian robs, cheats and brutalizes them; the United States lynches, exploits and disfranchises them, while they bear it all without making any physical demonstration, not because they are cowards, for the world knows their fighting record, but because of that distinct racial characteristic which renders them patient, forgiving and hopeful under the most adverse circumstances. But hear me, "It is a long lane that has no end," and a "deep well that has no bottom" and woe be unto those who have hemmed their prey up in that lane, when that prey has reached the end, when the prey that outnumbers them can go no further and must come out, when the prey does turn great will be the retribution. When an oppressed people are forced to strike their blow for freedom, and begin remembering the many things done to and against them, may God Almighty have mercy upon those who did the oppressing, for they need not expect any from an outraged people and an avenging race.

When the Negro embraced the recent world war, he had only a hope of getting a squarer chance under the respective governments in which he lived. Africans had no thought of a government of their own, but hopes of getting fair play under British, French and Belgian rule. American Negroes had no thought of a government of their own, but a hope of getting a squarer deal here in America. But they failed to get this and the shock of that failure and disappointment opened their eyes to the fact that God Almighty, who is di-

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recting the destinies of my people, had given them something infinitely bigger than sharing in somebody's else government. He gave the Negro, a new and awakened Negro, and a vision of a mighty African Republic, "God moves in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform, he plants his footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm." Before the war we had hopes of getting the crumbs from somebody's else table, today we have a vision of a table of our own. We had only a hope of partnership; today we have a vision of ownership. We had only a hope of apeing somebody's else civilization, today we we have a vision of a civilization built by black men. Africa being our home, the continent of our forefathers, the land from which we were snatched, we have vowed to go back. As regards its redemption, we know no other way or means different from those used by other races and nations who boast of their civilizations and superiorities today. We examine their path of progress and we see that it is paved with money, hedged about with suffering and sacrifice while every milestone is smeared with the blood of those who attempted to hinder. Don't let anybody tell you that the time has come, or is near at hand, when one can inhale the sweet flower of freedom by traveling any other path than this our oppressors traveled. There will be a path of intelligence and reason when mankind becomes civilized; but the brute in him is too dominant for intelligence and reason now. Freedom was never given to any man, and it will not be given to you. Other races and nations died for theirs, and your blood is no better, your life no dearer than theirs.

Today finds the black races of the world crowding their way toward that wonderful continent of their fathers, that land which abounds with wealth inestimable and glory untold. Its regions beckon for an explorer; its people wail for an organizer, a leader, and a teacher. As the world looks today, it sees the progressive spirit of one hundred million Negroes standing tiptoe on the shores of North and South and Central America, Canada and the West Indies, gazing with hopeful hearts towards those sparkling sands of Africa, which seem like the glorified portals of some new and wonderful world. Never before in the history of the Negro has there been such longing of hearts for a great, black Republic; never before has the ambition of black men so collectively yearned for a government of their own. This seems to be the opportune time. Races and Nations everywhere are in arms against each other. There is universal bankruptcy. The white races and nations in their rush for wealth and power, have torn and are tearing down what it took them hundreds of years to build. Egypt, Ireland, Poland, China, Japan, Hayti, Philipines, Mexico, India, and all of the smaller nations whom they have oppressed and whom combined form nearly three-fourths of this world's total population, are all hostile to white oppression and exploitation and are preparing to free themselves from white domination. Liberty, Freedom, Independence, is in the air.

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Darker races everywhere are begging for it. Darker races everywhere are working for it. Darker races everywhere are preparing to die for it.

The Negro is becoming conscious of the powers and possibilities which lie quiescent in him and is becoming restless under the yoke of economic, social and political slavery. Independence is instilling itself into the hearts and minds of 400 million Negroes who are demanding an exodus out of the Egypt of the old order of things into the Canaan of a new order of things, which new order of things calls for a mighty Republic of their own. We have no thought of attempting to rob anybody of their Government, we have no thought of turning against America, whom we love, regardless of her faults. She will ever hold a dear place in black men's hearts regardless of her cruelties and injustices. But regardless of our love, we cannot continue to submit to her wishes, seeing as we do, the mighty possibilities ahead.

A great African Republic is a necessity; the ambitions of black men require it. The propagation of the race needs it. Our industrial and commercial growth depends upon it. The development of Negro science, art and letters calls for it. The awakening of new thought and genius demands it. The development of racial instincts and the perpetuation of racial traditions insists upon it. The advancing sweep and sway of this new Negro consciousness necessitates a mighty and powerful African Republic. The absolute salvation of the Negro race can only be worked out by Negroes themselves.

For more than three hundred years, God Almighty has been pushing the sons of Ham toward that eventful day when Ethiopia would make her first feeble effort toward stretching forth her hand. Of it poets have sung and prophets have dreamed, but its realization is to become the pride and boast of Ethiopia's noblest Patriot, Marcus Garvey.

Marcus Garvey is one of history's providential geniuses, possessing a lofty purpose which is actuated by a holy ambition to benefit his race and mankind. He comes to his people endowed with as extraordinary a genius for everything pertaining to organization and leadership as Shakespeare had for Poetry, Mozart for Music, Angelo for Art. His unshakable faith in the possibility of his people, his courage to plead their cause at all times and under all circumstances, his power to organize and lead, his ability to not allow high position and vain glory remove him from the midst of his people, his knowledge of international affairs, and of the condition of black men everywhere, fits him for leadership of the U. N. I. A., the success of which will bring an eternal blessing to his race and immortal fame to his name. He stands with one faith, while an unbelieving race laughs. He stands with one idea, while a race ignorant of its depth and gravity, criticises. He stands with one purpose bold while the cowards of a race shudder and tremble.

Notwithstanding all opposition in the path of Negro progress, God Almighty is at work in the affairs of the black man, bringing the race, epoch by epoch, and sun by sun, up to a perfect union and an ideal civilization.

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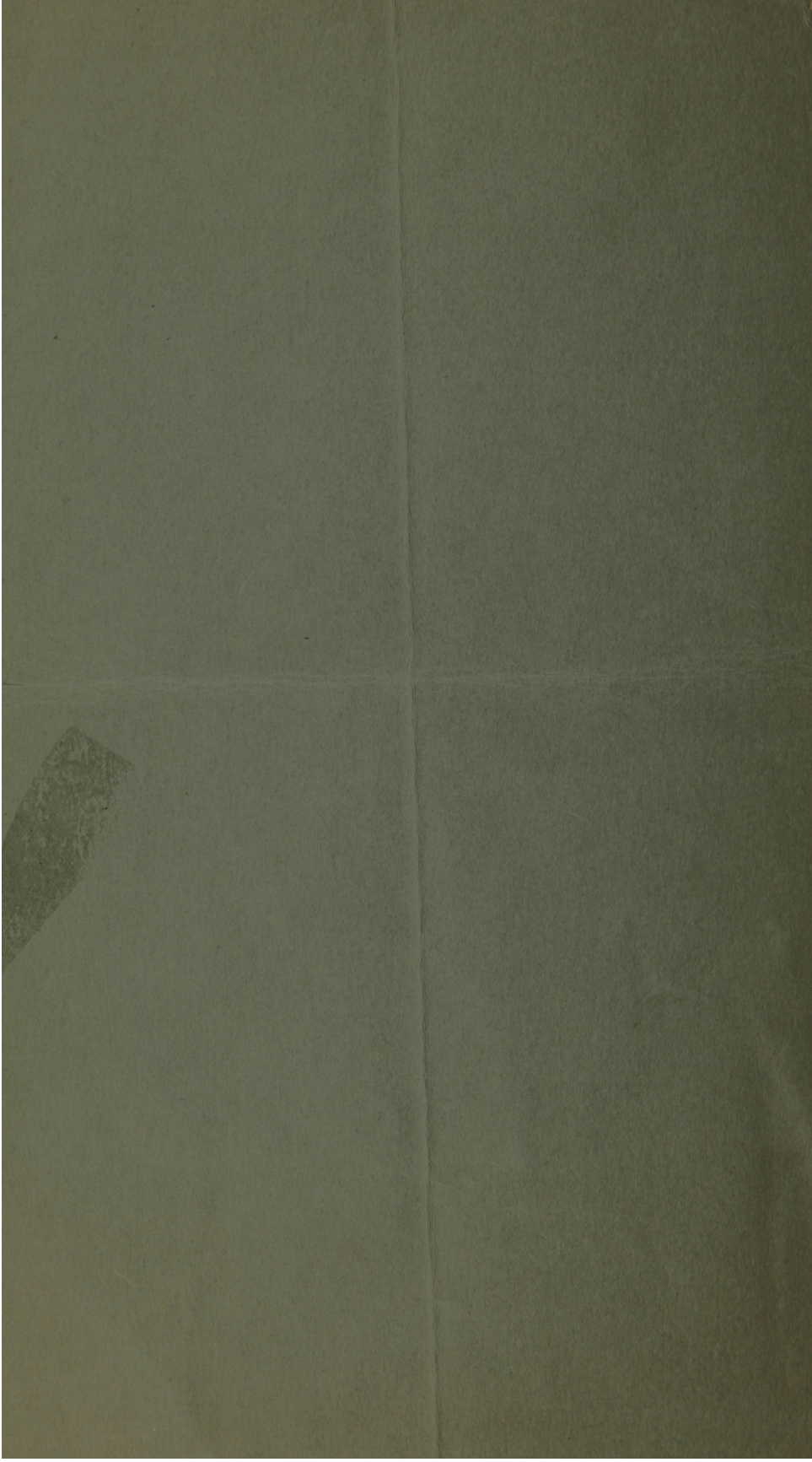

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